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INTRODUCTION

The Lockport Site is located on the east bank of the Red River about 30 kilometres north of Winnipeg. First reported by Donald Gunn in 1866, the site has been the scene of several archaeological excavations over the past 120 years. At first it was the six burial mounds which drew investigators to the vicinity, and uninformed speculation attributed the construction of these earthworks to the Toltecs, Vikings, Phoenicians and other exotic cultures. By the turn of the century, however, it was generally conceded that the mounds were the work of Native Indian peoples and the focus of scientific attention shifted to the village site on the river bank.

Continued interest in the site lies in the fact that it is stratified. Over time, various natural processes laid down a series of soil layers (or strata), each one containing the artifacts of the people who occupied the site at that time. The strata not only indicate the age of the artifacts within them; they also tell us something of the local conditions at various times. A stratum consisting of wave-washed sands and gravels indicates that the site was flooded at a particular time, while the dark "prairie" soil 1½ meters below the surface suggests a warmer and drier climate. The eight strata at the Lockport Site bear the remains of four distinct cultures spanning the last 3000 years. The depth of the site and its well-stratified deposits allow the lifeways of these people, and the local environmental conditions within which they lived, to stand out in sharp contrast to one another.

THE LARTER CULTURE (1000 B.C. - 200 B.C.)

The Food Quest

The first culture to occupy the site is termed "Larter", named after the Larter Site on River Road just 7 km south of Lockport. The overwhelming majority of animal bones found in Larter hearths and refuse pits are those of bison. Other foods, including fish and wild plants, were used, but bison was the dietary mainstay. Occasionally, the hunters would work in groups and stampede a herd over a cliff or into a pound. Judging from historic accounts of these hunting techniques, the party would have had to be very well organized since a premature charge or unexpected movement could easily stampede the herd in the wrong direction.

Bison are seasonally migratory animals, grazing on the open grasslands in summer and seeking shelter from the winter winds in more forested settings. As Lockport is situated near the northern forests at the edge of the North American grasslands, it seems most likely that these nomadic hunters occupied the site in the fall or winter. With the coming of spring, bison would once again begin their migration to the prairies situated to the west and south, and Larter peoples would move their camps accordingly.

Tools and Weapons

The Larter Culture predates the introduction of ceramics, the birch bark canoe and the bow and arrow to this region. The lack of refined watercraft would have been of little consequence to pedestrian Plains nomads. Instead of ceramic containers, leather bags and woven baskets likely served storage functions, but all evidence of these has vanished. For cooking, basin-shaped depressions were dug into the earth and lined with animal stomachs to render them waterproof. The water was heated by placing heated stones into the pit. In place of the bow, the "atlatl" (spear thrower or throwing board) was used.

The bulk of the Larter artifacts found are made of stone. Foremost among these are the distinctive corner-notched dart points, knives, scraping tools and punches for the preparation of leather items, gravers for incising wood and bone, and chisels and hammerstones. Coarse stones were used to abrade strips of sinew to make the material more serviceable for bindings.

Trade

One of the few pieces of evidence of trade among Larter peoples was a type of stone called "Knife River Flint" that was frequently used in the manufacture of their tools. This distinctive brown stone is native to western North Dakota, and was highly prized as a raw material.

Religion

Peoples of the Larter Culture buried their dead either individually or in small numbers in shallow pits, and erected rock cairns above them. The tools and weapons of the deceased were buried with them, and often some high-quality raw material was included for the production of more. The inclusion of such objects, presumably for use in the afterlife, suggests that these people conceived it to be similar to life on earth.

The people of the Larter Culture relied heavily on the bison for their needs.

Society

Small nomadic hunting societies such as those of the Larter Culture are among the least complex of any of the varieties of human cultures. Although bands average about 30 members and never exceed 100, the territory through which they hunt throughout the course of the year may be enormous, covering tens of thousands of square kilometres.

The underlying principle in the social fabric of these people is that of kinship rather than rank, wealth or profession as it is in our own society. Consequently, all its members are on a more or less equal social footing and one's occupation is determined by one's age and sex. There are no full-time political leaders or chiefs, no priests and no craft specialists. Certainly a hunting party requires a leader of sorts to co-ordinate the efforts of the group, but this role is filled by the individual who is recognized as the best hunter. Competition for this position is essentially unknown. Yet another individual may be recognized as being particularly skillful in dealing with the supernatural, and his services may thus be called upon at important times. The shaman or "medicine man" is often a skilled herbalist and treats illnesses by both physical and magical means. He may enter a trance state and allow spirits to speak through him to assist in decision-making that affects the group as a whole. Most of his time, however, is spent in the same kinds of activities as others of her/his age and sex.

Because of the fundamental importance of kinship, considerable significance is attached to marriage, as through it new social ties are forged. Men often acquire their brides from other bands, thereby establishing kin relations between them. Members of one band therefore feel free to call upon those of the other in times of need. After marriage, men generally remain within their own area, so to ensure that as hunter he is intimately familiar with his territory. It is women, whose skills are more readily transferred to new regions, who move to the camps of their husbands after marriage. With intermarriage between bands being so common, throughout the course of one's life an individual may establish a network of kin ties which spans hundreds of kilometres. Through these kinship networks trade items and new ideas frequently travel.

The cycle of activities for nomadic hunting peoples is markedly predictable. Men are the hunters who periodically travel away from camp in search of game. Women remain closer to home, caring for the children, collecting wild plant foods and snaring small animals. Although their participation in the food quest is of a less "spectacular" nature than that of the men, the women easily provide more than one-half of the protein consumed by the group as a whole. At certain times of the year, food may be so abundant in one area as to permit a larger grouping of people to reside together for a time. For the people of the Larter Culture, this may have been the autumn, when the bison began their shift to the winter range and when numerous wild plants ripened. The coming together of a number of bands would have been a time of feasting and the renewal of old acquaintances. Marriages were often arranged or the ceremonies conducted at this time and various rituals would have been performed. With the passing of this season, these groups may have broken up into bands or family units and dispersed themselves over a broader area.

Origins

The Larter Culture is but one point in the 10,000 year continuum of nomadic bison hunting cultures in southern Manitoba. In the southwestern part of the province, this tradition was destined to continue until the arrival of Europeans 2000 years later; but at Lockport and in the forests to the east, this way of life was soon to be changed dramatically.

Cultural History

The Larter Culture flourished in the Red River Valley at a time when southern Manitoba was covered by prairie to a greater extent than it was when the Europeans first arrived. A long drought which had desiccated the American Plains for thousands of years previously was drawing to a close during Larter times. Increased moisture and decreased temperatures permitted the southward and westward advance of the forest edge, and bison shifted their summer and winter ranges accordingly. It would seem that the bison hunters did the same. This westward shift began at 800 or 700 B.C. and likely took 500 years. The Larter Culture persisted in southern Saskatchewan until the time of Christ, but vanished from the Red River Valley some centuries earlier. The change from a grassland to a forest environment over much of southern Manitoba correlates with the disappearance of grassland-oriented cultures and the emergence of new cultures that were tied to the resources of the forest. At Lockport, all trace of the Larter people vanished at about 200 B.C.

THE LAUREL CULTURE (200 B.C. - 1000 A.D.)

The Food Quest

The means of making a living practised by the Laurel people mark a radical departure from that of the preceding Larter peoples. While the focus of the Larter economy was the grasslands, for the Laurel Culture it was the rivers, lakes and forests. Differences in technology reflect these different adaptations, and ramifications were felt throughout the rest of their cultures. Even their distributional ranges are almost exclusive: Larter sites are distributed from Alberta to the Ontario border, while Laurel occurs from Manitoba to Quebec. All of these differences highlight the fact that the Laurel Culture is not simply an outgrowth of an earlier local culture; it represents the influx of new people with a radically different way of life.

Laurel peoples hunted bison occasionally, but more important big game species were moose, caribou, deer and elk. A variety of smaller animals also figured in their economy; rabbits, woodchucks, beaver, muskrat, porcupine, marten, fisher and the otter all were exploited, and many of these reflect a riverine environment. A number of birds including the loon, swan, duck, passenger pigeon and goose were all taken, and the migratory patterns of some of these suggest seasonal scheduling on the part of the hunter. While fish were occasionally eaten by Larter peoples, by Laurel times they were critical to the economy. The pike, sturgeon, sucker, walleye, bass, gar

The people of the Laurel Culture introduced pottery to the Lockport Site.

and drum are among some of the species used and, once again, the seasonal availability of fish implies yet another factor which must have been considered in the establishment of the people's seasonal round of activities. Even turtles and molluscs were eaten, which fact bears witness once again to the importance of aquatic resources in the people's diet.

Plants, too, were used by Laurel peoples, probably to a greater extent than ever before. While the remains of only a few plant species, including hazelnuts and chokecherries, have actually been recovered from Laurel sites, many sites are located near stands of wild rice. The fact that Laurel peoples seem to have moved into Manitoba at the same time that wild rice spread into the province from the south underscores the importance that this species may have had in the Laurel economy. At certain times of the year stands of wild rice attract migratory wildfowl in large numbers; and a good "crop" can provide as much as 50% of the human diet.

The resources which the Laurel people exploited are native to a number of environmental zones and so it would seem that their seasonal movements were tied to the availability of different resources at different times of the year. The density of fish bones in large sites such as Lockport suggests that fish supported a large group of people during the spring, summer and fall, and this probably represents the coming together of a number of bands in response to a large, assured supply of food. Many of the same kinds of social activities pursued by the Larter people during their seasonal gatherings were also conducted by the Laurel folk, albeit on a slightly larger scale.

Towards the end of the fall get-together, subsistence activities would have shifted to the collection of nuts, berries and other plants, and the harvesting of wild rice, in addition to the taking of fall-spawning fish (e.g., whitefish and lake trout). These were dried on racks for later consumption. The onset of winter may have seen a shift to the hunting of large mammals, although the trapping of small riverine mammals could have supplemented the diet and provided pelts for clothing. These winter groupings were undoubtedly smaller than the summer ones, as available resources in the winter are fewer and more widely scattered. It seems likely that the large groups split into smaller bands or even families in late autumn and people travelled inland from the major watercourses in search of food.

Tools and Weapons

Laurel technology was considerably more complex and diversified than that of the Larter Culture. The same basic kinds of stone tools were used, but these were different in form and style. In early Laurel times, dart tips became smaller and this is commonly taken as evidence of a shift from the use of the atlatl to the bow and arrow. Overall, the bow is a more effective weapon than the spear thrower and much better suited to use in the forest where space is at a minimum. Mortars and pestles were also made of stone and this suggests the grinding of tough seeds and other vegetal matter to flour.

Perhaps the most obvious of the Laurel technological innovations was the introduction of pottery-making to this region. In Laurel sites, broken pottery fragments are often the most numerous artifacts recovered. Pots were made by stacking coils of clay one atop the other and smoothing them.

Laurel pottery and projectile points from The Lockport Site.

Various decorations were finally added to the rims of these cocoanut-shaped, pointed-based vessels. Pottery is often taken as evidence of a reduced nomadism, as these vessels are rather bulky and difficult to transport. Smoking pipes were also made of fired clay in addition to the ground stone varieties.

The distribution of Laurel sites and the way of life of these people indicate that they must have had some form of watercraft. This was probably the birch bark canoe, as the heavy woodworking tools required to manufacture the dugout variety are not found on Laurel sites.

Laurel peoples made considerably more use of perishable materials in manufacturing than did Larter peoples and, because they are more recent, many have been preserved. Three forms of bone harpoons are known and indicate one way in which fish were taken; netting needles suggest yet another. Hides were prepared with defleshing tools made from the leg bones of the deer or moose, and clothing was tailored with bone awls and needles. Mat-sewing shuttles suggest weaving as one means of textile production. Beaver teeth were used as effective chisels for working wood, and small fragments of bone were carefully notched for use as pottery decorating tools.

Most bone, shell, tooth and claw items were purely ornamental. These were fashioned into beads, pendants and necklaces, and even the talons of the bald eagle were worked into decorative objects. Native copper was also used, much of it originating in the rich deposits along the shores of Lake

Superior. Aside from awls, chisels, knives, fishhooks and scrapers, most copper objects, such as beads, pendants and bracelets, were purely ornamental.

Laurel houses were oval in shape and consisted of a frame of saplings driven into the ground and bound together at the top. Birch bark panels could be placed over this in the summer months, but hides would have been more practical in the winter.

Trade

As with the earlier Larter Culture, Knife River Flint was acquired from North Dakota, but yet another kind of stone, a black volcanic glass called obsidian, was also used, albeit rarely. The source of this material was the Yellowstone region of Wyoming, but it is unlikely that it was brought directly from its point of origin to Manitoba. Laurel times witnessed the emergence of a widespread and vigorous religious cult which centred in the Ohio Valley. The Hopewell "Culture", best known for its fine crafts and the construction of massive earthworks and burial mounds, was the focal point in a continent-wide trading network. It is more than likely that obsidian and perhaps some of the copper reached Manitoba via the Hopewellians, as in many Laurel traits, styles and customs we see a faint reflection of Hopewell Culture.

Religion

Religious practices, like most other things, became more complex and diversified in Laurel times. Obvious indicators are the large mounds constructed specifically for the interment of the dead. In preparation for burial of the deceased, red ochre was liberally added to the grave, either by sprinkling it into the pit or by rubbing it onto the body itself. A few of the personal possessions were placed with the individual for use in the afterlife. Occasionally, these "grave goods" were first broken to permit the thus-released spirit of the tools to travel with the spirit of their owner. It is possible that construction of some of the numerous mounds in the vicinity of Lockport was initiated during Laurel times.

Different individuals received different forms of burial after death. Even within a single mound, as many as four different kinds of burial may be found. The amount and nature of the accompanying grave goods varies from non-existent to lavish. All of this implies that some individuals were wealthier or more influential than others, and that status was no longer based solely on a person's age and sex. It is possible that during Laurel times some people came to be viewed as more "important" or influential than others. The recognition of rank or status is common among more complex societies, but is virtually unknown among highly nomadic hunting cultures.

Bone tubes, commonly called "sucking tubes", have also been found in Laurel sites. This class of artifact reflects the widespread belief that illness is due to the presence of a foreign object within the body of the afflicted person. Using the tube, the shaman will "magically" suck the object from his patient, removing it from his mouth afterwards as proof of the correctness of his diagnosis. Perhaps surprisingly, historic records show that this treatment enjoys a remarkably high success rate.

Various art forms pertaining to ceremonialism must have emerged during Laurel times, but very few examples have withstood the ravages of time. It seems likely that Laurel people created some of the rock paintings which may be found on the faces of granite cliffs across much of northern Manitoba. Some of these depict animals, objects or events which are immediately recognizable to us. Yet others depict fantastic creatures which must have been drawn from the mythologies of these people. In southeastern Manitoba, it is believed that the Laurel people created the boulder outline figures or "petroforms". Representations include animals as well as geometric figures but, like many of the rock paintings, their full meaning will never be clear.

Society

In most respects, Laurel society was somewhat more complex than that of the earlier Larter Culture. Although everyone was still considered to be equal, the larger size and greater density of Laurel villages implies the presence of more complex means of maintaining social bonds and defining inter-personal relationships. The obvious concern with death and the supernatural suggests that the role of the shaman was increasingly important in the day-to-day lives of these people. This, together with preferred burial treatment afforded some individuals, may mark the beginnings of formal status and leadership.

Origins

The cultural homeland of the Laurel people is clearly the shores of the Great Lakes where they and their ancestors had pursued the same kind of life for thousands of years. So successful was this adaptation that it allowed them to expand into other areas where the resources which they traditionally exploited were also to be found. Once in Manitoba, they continued to live as they always had, and for as long as a thousand years they were essentially the only peoples to travel the forested waterways of northern and eastern Manitoba. But this came to an end approximately 1000 years ago with the appearance of the Blackduck and Selkirk Cultures of the Late Woodland Period. Their relationship to these more recent groups, while not entirely clear, was certainly very complex. The ways they made a living, however, survived right up to the coming of the Europeans.

Cultural History

The shift from grassland to a forest environment at the Lockport Site occurred at the same time that the bison-hunting Larter people were being replaced by the hunters-fishers-trappers of the Laurel Culture. It appears that the Laurel people simply expanded along with the environment to which they were adapted. Perhaps critical to their migration into Manitoba were the areas in which wild rice grew, as this species first spread into southern Manitoba from the southeast at this time. The climatic change which drew these eastern forest people into southern Manitoba also caused a westward shift of the grasslands and, as a consequence, the bison which grazed upon

them. Certainly the earlier Larter people must have adjusted their hunting territories accordingly and had probably largely abandoned the Lockport Site prior to the arrival of the newcomers.

THE LATE WOODLAND CULTURES: BLACKDUCK AND SELKIRK (800 A.D. - 1700 A.D.)

The Food Quest

By 900 A.D., the Blackduck Culture with its distinctive cord-impressed pottery appeared in southern Manitoba, followed a few centuries later by the Selkirk Culture and the fabric-impressed ceramics which are its hallmark. In many respects, these cultures were quite similar and mark a continuation and further development of a way of life established by the earlier Laurel people. Blackduck sites are most common near the grassland/forest edge and, not surprisingly, the Blackduck people hunted the locally abundant bison — occasionally by means of "jumps" or corrals. Slightly more recently in time, the Selkirk people lived a bit farther north in more heavily forested regions and depended more on fish from the numerous lakes and streams. But these are more variations on a theme common to both than fundamental differences in their ways of life. Both cultures hunted the same range of species as did the earlier Laurel people, and in about the same proportions. If any trends are discernible at all, it is toward an increasing reliance upon fish and small mammals of the river bank and a de-empahsis upon big game animals. In all likelihood, plant foods became even more important. Although the utilization of wild rice by Laurel peoples is only suspected, the evidence of its use by Late Woodland times is conclusive.

The beginning of the Late Woodland Period was a time of momentous change over much of the North American continent. Corn agriculture was becoming a way of life for the massive chiefdoms of the American southeast, for the early Iroquoians in southern Ontario, and for the earthlodge villagers of the Missouri River. Something of this innovation is reflected in southern Manitoba and particularly at the Lockport Site. Here, gardening hoes fashioned from the shoulder blades of large mammals and grinding stones for milling plant seeds or fibres were found together with underground storage pits and pottery styles similar to those of the corn farmers of the Dakotas and Minnesota. Archaeological research has shown that corn was being grown by the inhabitants of Lockport as well, although the practice was apparently short-lived; a sudden cold, moist climatic trend of around 1500 A.D. shortened the growing season and may have rendered the farming of native varieties of corn unfeasible. Agriculture was not attempted in Manitoba again until the late 18th century.

The Late Woodland cultural setting at Lockport.

A gardening hoe made from a bison scapula.

Tools and Weapons

The Late Woodland "toolkit" essentially duplicates that of the Laurel Culture, although the styles of the tools are somewhat different. The characteristic ceramic vessels, probably the most distinctive items of these cultures, are more spherical than are the earlier Laurel pots, and were formed by being struck around the outside with paddles rather than by the stacking of coils.

Trade

Like their predecessors, the Late Woodland peoples of southern Manitoba imported Knife River Flint, obsidian and copper. The efficiency of the North American trading network at this time is indicated by the presence in southern Manitoba of dentalium shells from the West Coast.

Religion

Mound burial continued to be an important ceremonial practice in the Late Woodland Period. The Late Woodland mounds are much more numerous locally than are their Laurel counterparts. Some of the rock paintings of the Canadian Shield were probably created during this period, for many of the same reasons as were their forerunners. Sucking tubes are also occasionally found, suggesting the continuation of beliefs and practices surrounding illness and cures. One new item is the bird bone whistle. These are similar to the ones later used in the Sundance ceremony by many Plains-dwelling Native peoples. The Sundance is primarily concerned with renewal, revitalization and ritual cleansing or purification of the tribe.

Society

During Late Woodland times, the peoples of southern Manitoba lived in larger groups for longer portions of the year than ever before, and this was made possible by increased efficiency in environmental exploitation and by diversification of the food resources that were utilized. As human groups become larger, new and additional methods are required to provide for the smooth functioning of the society and for the maintenance of order. Frequently, this is accomplished by voluntary associations or "clubs" such as secret societies, warrior societies, women's social groups, and other associations which are not based upon ties of kinship within their membership. Each of these organizations accepts much of the responsibility for the conduct of its members. Kinship systems themselves may be modified and made more complex so as to group people in new ways; clans are but one example. Certainly the kinship of the Cree in southern Manitoba and northwestern Ontario early in the Historic Period was vastly more complex than our own. Modern-day post-industrial society makes use of the Law, rather than kinship, to maintain order.

Origins

The Late Woodland cultures of southern Manitoba seem to have been an outgrowth of the earlier Laurel Culture. Their territories, ways of life and

artifact types are all very similar. More important, however, are the fundamental similarities in the means the peoples used in order to survive — the very foundations of existence.

Many lines of evidence indicate that the Selkirk people were the direct ancestors of the modern day Cree and so at least some of the Cree customs observed by the early European explorers were probably practiced by the Selkirk people as well. There is general agreement among archaeologists that the Blackduck people were Algonkians — and hence were of the same language family as that to which Cree belongs.

Conclusions

Although the sequence of prehistoric cultures at the Lockport Site includes only the final one-third of the period of human occupation of southern Manitoba, it represents nearly the full range of the different ways of life known here. The trend is from nomadism to living in a fixed place for longer portions of the year; from a specialized economy depending largely upon a single big game species to a more diversified one incorporating literally hundreds of plant and animal species; and from a grassland to a forest adaptation. Increasing complexity and elaboration in social organization, religious practices and "political" controls accompany these trends.

Bison must certainly have been an attractive resource for our early peoples. It has been estimated that when the white man first arrived in central North America, these animals numbered 60,000,000. A successful hunt would result in more food than the small group could possibly use. But more important to human survival than the occasional superabundance of food, is the assurance of a constant supply of a minimally acceptable amount. The possibility of a large amount of food **next** year would be small consolation to a band facing **immediate** starvation. The narrowly-focused, single-minded pursuit of one particular, often unpredictable species such as bison can occasionally result in just such a crisis.

A diversified way of making a living, however, implies economic insurance. Should one species suddenly not be available, there is a host of others to which a group may resort. Some of these may actually increase in abundance due to the same environmental conditions which caused the decline of the other. Forest and forest-edge settings offer precisely this diverse array of resources, and with a secure source of high-quality protein such as fish provide, a culture would be more than adequately prepared to deal with virtually any environmental pressure. It is this kind of subsistence strategy that permits larger, more stable and more settled populations and, with them, elaboration of the arts, crafts, social and political organization and religious customs. The prehistoric sequence at Lockport is an unparalleled example of precisely this kind of cultural evolution.